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Supplemental Files in Electronic Theses and Dissertations: Implications for Policy and Practice [Poster Abstract]

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Abstract

With electronic deposit of theses and dissertations standard practice, the inclusion of supplemental files with these documents has also become more common. Supplemental files might include research protocols, data sets, software, primary sources, and other supporting material. But how well are these files documented and described either within the thesis or dissertation or within the supplemental file itself? What ramifications does acceptance of supplemental files have both on institutional policy (what is accepted as a supplemental file? What is required alongside the file?) and library curation practices (are the files documented well enough for use and preservation?). The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) has required electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) deposit since 2010, and has seen deposit of over 3700 ETDs into IDEALS. These are made openly available (with an option for a limited embargo). Approximately 100 of these include some form of supplemental file. Since the inception of the ETD program, the Library has been tracking what these supplemental files are and how well they are documented. This poster will present an overview of our findings, both in terms of the types of files included, what disciplinary areas these are from, and how well documented these supplemental files are. The poster will cover some of the policy and practice issues that we see arising from this analysis.

